

100 Ways of Using Data to Make Lives Better

A series from The Farr Institute of Health Informatics Research showcasing the UK's most significant examples of using data in research

Calculating the Cost of Asthma to the NHS

The most comprehensive study of asthma in the UK, led by the Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research, has found that many people are not receiving care that meets even the most basic standards, with asthma costing the UK health service at least £1.1 billion each year



Mome Mukherjee, Andrew Stoddart, Colin R. Simpson, Christopher Dibben, Bright I. Nwaru, Brian McKinstry and Aziz Sheikh, Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research at The University of Edinburgh *Public Health Case Study 30*
Ramyani P. Gupta, David P. Strachan, University of London
Angela Farr, Martin Heaven, Gwyneth A. Davies, Deborah Fitzsimmons, Ronan A. Lyons, Ceri J. Phillips and Amrita Bandyopadhyay, Swansea University
Chantelle Aftab, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh; Colin Fischbacher, NHS National Services Scotland; Michael D. Shields, Queen's University Belfast

The Challenge

Asthma is a serious condition that affects one in every 12 people in the UK. Even though it's the most common lung condition in this country, much of the data about it is outdated or unavailable. This makes it harder to develop policies to improve the care for patients and reduce the cost at the same time.

The Research

A team of researchers led by the Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research (AUKCAR) looked at 27 databases, consisting of national health surveys and administrative, health and social care records in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They focussed on data recorded in 2011-12, including drug prescriptions, the number of NHS24 and ambulance calls for asthma attacks, hospital statistics, the number of people claiming disability living allowance, and death records.

The Results

The study found that each year almost 100,000 people are admitted to hospital due to asthma attacks and at least 1,000 patients die from it. It also confirmed that the UK has one of the highest burdens of asthma in the world with more than 18 million people experiencing symptoms at some point in their lives. The researchers calculated that asthma costs the NHS at least £1.1 billion each year.

The Impact

This was the most comprehensive study of asthma in the UK. It found that many people are not receiving care that meets even the most basic standards.

Now that these shortcomings have been found, new approaches can be put in place to improve the lives of patients, such as focussing more on GPs providing the main care for asthma patients (rather than hospitals) as well as introducing tools such as smart inhalers.

The researchers also found some major data gaps that have made it difficult to easily get statistics about asthma in the UK. This will help improve record keeping in the future.

For more information about asthma visit:

Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research (AUKCAR):

www.aukcar.ac.uk

Asthma UK: www.asthma.org.uk

Enquiries to Sabine Kurz, Communications Assistant, The Farr Institute of Health Informatics Research, sabine.kurz@ed.ac.uk